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EDITORS' TABLE.

EDITORS: A. S. PACKARD, JR., AND E. D. COPE.

— The first and hasty conclusion of many people on the perusal of Darwin's *Origin of Species* was, that the populations of the earth, including ourselves, are the food for the mills of unconscious and implacable forces, or at best are the sport of aimless chance. And so long as all evolution was supposed to be included in the two words "heredity and natural selection," there was good ground for pessimism, and even despair. It is a fact that in the early stage of thought on this subject, teachers as well as scholars underrated the importance of the question of the origin of variation, or the "origin of the fittest," although it had been publicly discussed in France a third of a century earlier.

The laws of mechanical evolution which are adduced to explain the "origin of the fittest," do they give any relief to anxious humanity from indiscriminating domination of "the God of Forces?" The very term, "mechanical evolution," would seem to preclude any opportunity for the element of personality either as author or director. The pessimist and the fatalist may still apparently claim the field. But the nature, and hence the origin, of "the fittest," must be thoroughly understood before such judgment can be pronounced on the order of things.

With the advent of sensibility came pleasure and pain. Pessimism is the belief in the *reign of suffering*. On the other hand hedonism believes, if not in the reign of pleasure, at least in the reign of the greatest happiness to the greatest number. Do sensitive beings walk open-eyed into pain or pleasure once known, without fear of one or anticipation of the other? Every one knows to the contrary. Memory has been the teacher of the ages, so that the avoidance of pain and the pursuit of pleasure has been the business of living things since the dawn of consciousness and the existence of memory. It is more than probable that these prime movers of the universe have directed the mechanical forces into profitable channels, and have converted them to their use. More than this, mechanical evolution means the development of the machine that directs other machines, the brain, and the mind. Hence mechanical evolution is the evolution of intelligence. Of course the lessons of experience are in part lessons of pain, and beings that cannot act in accordance

with lessons sufficiently learned, will experience a maximum of suffering, and may have foundation for a private stock of pessimism of their own. But a tolerance of suffering is of various duration, and sooner or later intelligence will have its beneficent way. And as "knowledge is power," it results that the evolution of the living world and of men, has been and will be very much as they have it, and enlightened intelligence, well lived up to, has always resulted in a minimum of pain.—C.

— The numbers of the *AMERICAN NATURALIST* for 1883 were issued at the following dates: January, Jan. 5; February, Jan. 31st; March, Feb. 21st; April, March 15th; May, April 18th; June, May 17th; July, June 20th; August, July 16th; September, Aug. 15th; November, Oct. 19th; December, Nov. 28th.

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RECENT LITERATURE.

HATTON AND HARVEY'S *NEWFOUNDLAND*.¹—This is a successful account from historical, physiographic, ethnographic and economic points of view of the first English colony, and the last to be developed. It is the joint production of a resident on the island, Rev. Mr. Harvey, who with general culture and an intimate knowledge of the land and its inhabitants, unites a hearty appreciation of science, and is well known for the interest he has taken in the natural history of the Newfoundland seas; and of Mr. Hatton, who has rewritten and edited the whole work. For our part we do not see but that Mr. Harvey was quite competent for this task both as a writer, observer and collector of the facts. However that may be, the result is an authoritative, accurate, pleasantly written and timely manual of Newfoundland, with excellent full-page illustrations and others in the text. The map should have been a much better one; otherwise we have little fault to find with the volume.

The history of Newfoundland has been a peculiar one. The authors say it presents the British government at its worst and its best. How the "worst" could have been much worse, and how bad the "best" has been, is clearly brought out, and is an interesting study in sociology. The dominance of selfish greed on the part of a few British merchants, and the absence and entire lack for years of even rational and humanitarian feelings on the part of the mother-country, shows how many savage traits survived in the Anglo-Saxon race, of the best specimens, a century

¹ *Newfoundland. Its History, its Present Condition, and its Prospects in the Future.* By JOSEPH HATTON and the Rev. M. HARVEY. Reprinted from the English edition; revised, corrected and enlarged. Illustrated. Boston, Doyle & Whittle, 1883. 8vo. pp. 431.